

The Ideal Christian

#3—The Desired Christian Personality

12 Lessons

Prepared by:
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2009

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Table of Contents

The Ideal Christian #3—The Desired Christian Personality

Lesson	Topics	Pages
1 --	Why the Emphasis on Love?	1-3
2 --	A Person of Kindness	4-6
3 --	A Person of Truth	7-10
4 --	A Person of Patience	11-14
5 --	A Person of Faith	15-18
6 --	A Person of Hope	19-21
7 --	Does Not Envy	22-25
8 --	Not Puffed Up	26-29
9 --	Not Rude	30-33
10--	Does Not Seek Its Own	34-37
11--	Is Not Easily Provoked	38-40
12--	Thinks No Evil	41-43

Lesson 1

"Why the Emphasis on Love?"

So much is said in the New Testament on love and its value. Why such an emphasis? What is it about this characteristic or quality that merits so much to be said about it? The Apostle ended his chapter on Love in 1 Corinthians 13 with "*The Greatest of these is love!*" Three things come to mind that can give insight as to why the emphasis is placed upon love and the greatness of love.

1. God is love! This alone is sufficient to show why it is so great. God is the embodiment of love (1 Jn. 4:8). The source of all He does comes out of love for His creatures. And He exemplified the extreme greatness of His love by sending His Son to earth as a human to take our place so we could be set free from the penalty of sin (1 Jn. 4:7-10). The greatness of His love is seen in:

- a) He loves the unworthy (Rom. 5:6-8);
- b) He loves all His creatures (Jn. 3:16; Acts 10:34);
- c) He is the source of love—without God, there is, or cannot be, love;
- d) God's love is just (Rom. 3:26). Sin had to be dealt with, but justly, if man was to be saved from the penalty of sin.

2. Love is greater than Faith and Hope! Faith apart from love is cold just like faith apart from works is dead (Jas. 2:24-26). Saving faith must be accompanied by love or it leaves faith empty (1 Cor. 13:1-3). Love is greater than Faith and Hope because:

- a) Without love there would be no gospel to be believed (Rom. 1:16) nor hope for the lost (Rom. 8:24);
- b) It is sacrificial (Jn. 15:13);
- c) It serves in the lowest places (Jn. 13:1, 4-5);
- d) It is practical (1 Jn. 2:17-18);
- e) It obeys (Jn. 14:15);
- f) It makes service easier (1 Jn. 5:3);
- g) It is willing to give (2 Cor. 8:1-5, 8);
- h) It is the foundation of a lasting marriage (Eph. 5:25-33).

3. Love is the greatest because it fulfills the Law of God! When Jesus was asked what was the greatest commandment, he answered that it was to love God with all of our heart, soul, and mind (Matt. 22:35-40). But He didn't stop there and added that the second greatest is like the first; that is, we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. And then, He gave a significant statement: "*On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.*" This same emphasis is given by the Apostle in his Letter to the Romans (Rom. 13:8-10). He states it twice in these three verses that love fulfills all of the demands of the Law of God.

There is another significant concept about this love—It is nothing if it is expressed only in word! It must be expressed in deed and in truth also (1 John 3:16-18). God showed us His love by the sending of His Son to earth; and we must show our love by keeping His Law (Jn. 14:15).

Love Clarified!

In our language, we use the word "love" in many different ways. We usually have to add another word or phrase in order to qualify what we are talking about. Do we mean the same thing when we say: "*I love my spouse*," as when we say: "*I love my dog*," or "*I love chocolate pie*?" In the Greek language there are a possible four different words that are used to help clarify what they had reference to. See below:

Ερως—Our English word "erotic" is a transliterated word that we have a pretty good idea of what the word means. This is "sexual" love or physical passion. It is usually a desire to obtain gratification for one's self. There is nothing wrong with this concept because God has made us this way for not only propagation purposes, but also for pleasure. Godly love needs to have "Eros" under control as well as expressed correctly to one's mate in the marital relationship. It is interesting to note that this word is not used in our New Testament—but other terms are used to denote such.

Στοργη—This is "family love" that is natural and should exist between family members. The Gentile world was condemned by God for their lack of this natural affection (Rom. 1:31; 2 Tim. 3:3). The term "kinship" is a way of referring to this natural affection that should exist in a family. This should automatically be there unless it is destroyed by wrong-doing.

Φιλεο—This has reference to warm, close companionship, friendship, or to a special relationship between human beings. The family should not only have Storge, but Phileo and agape as well. The usual use of this word would seem to be something that happens naturally; it is not something that you would command of a person. The only exception to this rule that I am aware of is found in Titus 2:4 where Phileo seems to be commanded.

Αγαπε—This is "Godly love!" This is the kind of love God embodies and has expressed to His creatures. This word is usually over-whelmingly in our New Testament (about a twelve to one ration in relation to the use of Phileo). In Paul's writings it is in a much higher ration (36 to 2). The Greeks did not use this word much in their writings, so it was a fitting choice to use this word to denote "Godly love!"

Significant Comparisons

1. **Eros** is more physically driven and impulsive, while **Agape** is directed by a person's choice and will.
2. **Phileo** is more emotional and affectionate and mutual, while **Agape** does not necessarily have any of these three things—It is something that comes from the Will of the person.
3. **Agape** can be expressed not only to friendly people, but even to an enemy. It denotes the highest and most perfect expression of love—like God shows to us! **Eros** and **Phileo** are obviously connected with the idea of love or affection, but **Agape** goes even further and "loves" the unloveable! **Agape** (Love) comes from our mind and our will and is deeper and more stable than the other kinds of love.

Concluding Thoughts

This study on **The Desired Christian Personality** is to challenge us to the ultimate—to be the kind of Christian that would radiate the love of God to all around them. We need goals toward which to strive.....and there is no greater goal than to be "*perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect.*" (Matt. 5:48). Or, it may be adequately expressed by saying: "**To love as God loves!**"

But if we are to really attain to such high goals, it is necessary that we fully understand what is meant by the word "Love!" The Bible does not attempt to define it so much as to illustrate it. God demonstrated it so that we could understand what it is like to love as God loves.

1 Cor. 13:1-8,13 is God's way of helping us to understand what it is like to love. You may have to dig down a little deeper in your study to fully grasp what is being communicated; but, it will certainly be worth the effort.....**SO.....Onward and upward towards "A Desired Christian Personality!"OR....the "Ideal Christian!"**

Questions for Discussion

True or False

- _____ 1. Love should regulate our feelings, words, and actions toward others.
- _____ 2. Love is the church's most effective weapon in its fight against sin and its efforts to reach the lost.
- _____ 3. The New Testament puts more emphasis upon faith than on love.
- _____ 4. The Greatness of God's love has been shown in His beautiful creation.
- _____ 5. Without love there would be no reason to have faith or hope.
- _____ 6. God's Law is summed up in one word "love!"
- _____ 7. The English word "Love" is inadequate to explain what God's love is.
- _____ 8. Family love and friendship love is the same as Godly love.
- _____ 9. Phileo is a love that can be expressed to one's enemies.
- _____ 10. Eros is a sinful concept of love.
- _____ 11. Only God can love the unlovable.
- _____ 12. The ultimate goal of the Christian is to love as God loves.
- _____ 13. A correct understanding of Godly Love is a necessity in order to have the Desired Christian Personality.

Lesson Two

"A Person of Kindness"

The word "kind" has more than one usage in the Old Testament. There are about three different Hebrew words that are translated kind:

- a) **Zan**—Kind, similar, same group, close, family. See the following Scriptures to illustrate:

Gen. 1:1 _____
 Gen. 1:12 _____
 Gen. 1:24 _____
 Gen. 6:20 _____

- b) **Tob**—Kindly

Jere. 52:32 _____

- c) **Chesed**—Kind, Kindness

Gen. 24:14 _____
 Gen. 24:49 _____
 Ruth 1:8 _____

The word "kind" is used to translate two Greek words in the New Testament:

- a) **Genos**—Kind, Same group, family.

Matt. 13:47 _____
 1 Cor. 12:10 _____
 1 Cor. 14:10 _____

- b) **Chrestos**—Kind, Useful, Beneficial

Lk. 6:35 _____
 Eph. 4:32 _____
 1 Cor. 13:4 _____

In the New Testament, in particular, there are combination of Greek words that are used to denote special kindness shown to certain people:

- a) **Philanthropia**—Love of Mankind

Acts 28:2 _____

- b) **Philadelphia**—Love of Brother or brotherly love.

2 Pet. 1:7 _____

The general idea in the Old Testament is that of kindness, favor, or mercy. In the New Testament, the general idea is that of being gracious or merciful. "Lovingkindness" is often used when it is God expressing or showing the concept. The Old Testament talks about "great kindness" to emphasize the unusualness of the act or acts:

Neh. 9:17 _____

Jonah 4:2 _____

Joel 2:13 _____

Love and Kindness

Kindness is an expression of what we call "love." Love looks for ways of being constructive, useful, profitable, and encouraging to others. Mark's Gospel pictures Jesus as busily engaged in doing kindnesses for people. His life was filled with kind deeds and a sympathetic heart. He also taught that showing kindnesses, to needy people in particular, will help to determine our eternal destiny!

Matt. 25:31-46

The Golden Rule states it clearly: *"Do unto others what you would have them do for you."* (Matt. 7:12). It is to do kind deeds to others because we would enjoy those same things ourselves.

God is the great example of showing kindness; and He is held up before us so that we can understand what it is to be kind to one another.

Eph. 4:32

Rom. 12:19-21

Kindness comes from a right attitude towards others, a good heart, or a heart of respect for fellow-humans.....that is, "LOVE!" There are terms that are identified with kindness, such as: **Gentleness, Graciousness, Tenderness, and affectionate.**

The idea of being kind or showing kindness to people is for the purpose of encouraging them, showing unselfishness, to spare people's feelings, or to show acceptance of people as they are....just as we want acceptance!

The Opposite of Kindness

Several words are used to try to show a contrast between kindness and unkindness: **to be harsh, to be censorious, to be dejecting, finding fault, objecting, etc.** Instead of loving people, we attack people—desire to do them harm. The real test of kindness is not when someone is kind to us; but, it is when people are unkind to us, and we show mercy, goodness, kindness, forgiveness, etc. They may deserve to be punished, but we do not wish that on them. Rather, we go out of our way to show kindness to them. God's kindness is unmerited, and so should ours be as well. The **Desired Christian Personality** will show kindness to his enemy and thereby overcome evil by doing kind deeds or being gracious towards them.

We often think of "kindness" as only good or "positive acts." However, there are times when the greatest "kindness" for someone is to do something to wake them up to their true condition before God. The Church at Thessalonica had a problem with people who would not work and trying to live off the church (probably). The Apostle had warned them when he was in their midst the first time that they were to work and earn their own living.

1 Thess. 4:11-12 _____

Evidently, the word got to the Apostle a few months later that there were still some who would not work. The Apostle gave God's prescription for such people:

2 Thess. 3:6, 10-11, 14 _____

While this may sound harsh, it is in reality "love!" These people were in danger of losing their soul! They needed to make a change or else! This was the best action that the church could take to help awaken them to the gravity of their condition.

However, the Apostle also made another statement that helps to show the kindness.

2 Thess. 3:15 _____

This action of withdrawing fellowship from the non-repentant was not to be taken as a harsh act, nor as hatred for a fellow-Christian.....but it was to be understood as "love" for the person—that is, expressing love as a great and kind act of mercy!

This same action was recommended for a brother in 1 Corinthians 5. He would not repent, so they withdrew from him to try to save his soul. It was done with the right spirit and actions and was able to bring the man to repentance.

2 Cor. 2:6-8 _____

Concluding Thoughts

The motive behind our actions, as well as, the spirit with which we express our actions will help determine whether the actions are kind or harsh. We are encouraged to make sure that our actions, as well as our words come across as "kindness!"

Questions for Discussion

True or False

- ____ 1. One Greek word for "kind" indicates that something is of the same group or family.
- ____ 2. Chesed is the Hebrew Word for Kindness.
- ____ 3. Chrestos is the Greek Word for Kindness.
- ____ 4. "Loving kindness" is used to translate the Hebrew words that refer to God's actions.
- ____ 5. Kind acts are our way of showing our love.
- ____ 6. Kind deeds will help determine one's eternal destiny.
- ____ 7. The "Golden Rule" is just another way of telling us that we should be kind to each other.
- ____ 8. Kind acts are a way of showing our concern for others and demonstrating our unselfishness.
- ____ 9. Withdrawing of fellowship from an unrepentant brother is an act of kindness, not harshness.
- ____ 10. We show kindness also by forgiving the repentant person.

Lesson Three

"A Person of Truth"

"Love does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth." Every person is basically faced with the choice between truth or error! Which one do we desire—truth or error? Which one do we find joy in—truth or error? Love will cause a person to choose truth over error. It will be obvious that He:

- a) Wants truth;
- b) Seeks truth;
- c) Eagerly listens to truth;
- d) Gladly accepts the truth that can set him free (Jn. 8:32).
- e) Also rejoices in truth—when it is told, when it is desired by others, and when the truth is lived!

A contrast is drawn here between a person of truth or one who would rather accept error because it satisfies his wants. A **person of truth** does not want, seek after, eagerly listen to, or gladly accept iniquity or unrighteousness. Rather, he is saddened and disappointed to see people walk in the way of iniquity or unrighteousness.

1 Jn. 1:5-6 _____

The person of truth finds no pleasure, nor any reason to rejoice in error, sin, iniquity, or unrighteousness! It may have its pleasures for a "season," but the day of retribution will come to those who walk that way.

2 Pet. 2:15 _____

Rom. 1:18 _____

Lk. 13:27 _____

2 Tim. 2:19 _____

A Sad Day!

It is truly a sad day and a sad time when people:

- 1—Do not desire truth nor want to hear truth, but rather resists truth (Eph. 1:13; 2 Tim. 3:8);
- 2—Are deceived (Jer. 9:5) and destitute of truth (1 Tim. 6:5);
- 3—Will not speak only truth to each other (Isa. 59:4, 14-15);

4—Will not love the truth that can save their soul (2 Thess. 2:10-12);

5—Prefer to walk in darkness rather than light (1 Jn. 1:5-7).

In the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha there could not be found ten righteous people to save them from utter destruction.

2 Peter 2:6-8 _____

When people love error rather than truth, they turn things upside down and twisted:

Isa. 5:20 _____

Prov. 14:34 _____

What Truth Can do!

When making choices, questions need to be asked so that we can make the better choice. When we choose between truth and error, we need to ask about the fruit that each bears? **Truth can:**

1. **Exalt a nation, but sin or unrighteousness will bring it down** (Prov. 14:34).
2. **Make us free from sin and its penalty** (Jn. 8:32).
3. **Sanctify us** (Jn. 17:17, 19).
4. **Beget us unto God** (Jas. 1:18).
5. **Causes us to know that we are of the truth** (1 Jn. 3:19; 4:6).

We have good reasons to rejoice in truth! A soul is being redeemed and has the hope of Heaven some day. We will therefore gladly serve God in sincerity and truth (Joshua 24:14).

What can **Error Do?**

1. **Deceive us** (Jer. 9:5; Heb. 3:12).
2. **Blind us to the truth** (1 Jn. 2:11).
3. **Bring on swift destruction** (2 Pet. 2:1).
4. **Blaspheme truth** (2 Pet. 2:2).
5. **Promises the passing pleasures of sin** (Heb. 11:25).

A person of truth **cannot** rejoice in error because its fruit is terrible! Souls are being led into everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power (2 Thess. 1:9). If I rejoice in unrighteousness, I can only look forward to hearing that awful sentence: *"depart from me, all you workers of iniquity."* (Luke 13:27).

Love Rejoices in the God of Truth

Love not only rejoices in truth....but even more, love rejoices in the God who is truth, who has given us truth!

Deut. 32:4 _____

He is the measurement of truth! Everything is judged by Him as the standard of truth.

Ps. 119:151 _____

He judges people by this truth.

Ps. 96:13 _____

He has sent forth His truth into all the earth.

Ps. 57:10 _____

His truth endures forever.

Ps. 117:2 _____

God sent His Son to earth in the likeness of human flesh so that we might come to know His truth in completeness.

Jn. 1:17 _____

Jn. 14:6 _____

It is no wonder then that God admonishes us in many ways about truth:

1. Buy it and do not sell it (Prov. 23:23).
2. Believe the truth (1 Tim. 4:3).
3. Walk in truth (Isa. 8:3; 2 Jn. 4; 3 Jn. 4).
4. Teach God's ways in truth (Matt. 22:16).
5. Worship in spirit and truth (Jn. 4:23).
6. Obey the truth (Rom. 2:8).
7. Be established in truth (2 Pet. 1:12).
8. Tell the truth to others (Gal. 4:16).
9. Not to walk in darkness (error), but walk in light (truth) (1 Jn. 1:5-7).

Concluding Thoughts

When people do not want the truth or love the truth, they will be sent lies and delusions that will cause them to be condemned by the God of truth. A person of truth will absolutely rejoice in truth and not in iniquity or unrighteousness. He will want to encourage everyone to listen to truth, believe truth, and obey truth; so that they can be saved eternally. He definitely will not rejoice in iniquity or unrighteous living on the part of others. His heart is set on truth and he strives to live it to the best of his ability.

Questions for Discussion

True or False

- _____ 1. Every person is faced with a basic choice between truth and error.
- _____ 2. People choose to believe error because they are not able to understand truth.
- _____ 3. People who do not desire truth will resist truth.
- _____ 4. People can be so deceived that they can become destitute of truth.
- _____ 5. Love of truth will save a person's soul.
- _____ 6. Sodom and Gomorrha were cities that did not love truth.
- _____ 7. When people say that immoral and ungodly actions are okay, it shows that they do not know the truth.
- _____ 8. Sin exalts a nation, but unrighteousness is a reproach.
- _____ 9. Those who blaspheme truth will receive swift destruction from the Lord.
- _____ 10. A person of truth cannot rejoice in error.
- _____ 11. Jesus came to earth to make God's truth fully known.
- _____ 12. The Old Testament states that God had sent forth His truth into all the earth.

Lesson Four

"A Person of Patience"

"Love suffers love.....Bears all things.....Endures all things." Godly love is expressed in many different ways. We have combined three expressions that we feel go together well, but have their own separate concepts. We will look at each one separately.

Love Suffers Long

There are some things that cannot be corrected quickly or right away; so, we need to learn to live with the situation until it can be solved. Love can help us to be patient or suffer long with people or our situation. As long as things go well, we don't need patience. It is when they go wrong that we need love.

Luke 6:32 _____

Our challenge comes from people not thinking or acting like we think they should. Such actions can become very irritating and annoying to us. This is when we need to love (be patient) with people and their "faults." God looks down upon your life or mine and doesn't like our attitudes or our actions. He would like for us to change, but knowing man—it may take some time. God is longsuffering with us, hoping for that change to take place.

2 Pet. 3:9 _____

Love helps us to make allowances for peoples' weaknesses. Someone has expressed the following thought in regards to our subject:

*"I do not quite understand why you are as you are, but
I cannot understand myself; and sense there is ONE
who understands us both, let us extend to each other
the patience He extends to us both."*

Love can help us to be patient with people—no matter how they may treat us. We are admonished to treat them with kindness, gentleness, and patience. Christians enjoy God's grace (patience); and we need to see the need for us to be patient (gracious) with others.

1 Pet. 3:20 _____

Through patience lost souls can be saved!

Rom. 12:21 _____

Bears All Things

Love enables us to bear up under far more than we may even think that we can! It is hard for us to bear up under undesirable circumstances, but love gives us the motivation and strength to do so. It is hard to bear with those we do not like—especially our enemies; but, love helps us to bear all things!

Matt. 5:44 _____

Rom. 12:18-21 _____

Love blesses us with the determination to love people who are not very likeable. It is something we have to will to do—not a question of "feeling like it!"

Gal. 6:2 _____

Gal. 6:5 _____

Love has no real limits to what it can do that is good and right!

Eph. 4:2 _____

1 Pet. 4:8 _____

Love does not break under injuries or provocations, but bears up under all things that come into our lives. Love even helps us to search for the good in men—not the disagreeable! Love never gives up on God, or men, or on circumstances in life—for we have hope that gives us the strength to bear all things.

Phil. 4:13 _____

God's love for us allows things to come into our lives that can serve as a means of chastening us. We are encouraged to bear up under such chastening by remembering that love chastens for our good.

Heb. 12:5-6 _____

The withdrawal of fellowship by the Church is a means of chastening for our good and is expressed out of "love" for my soul. So, if it comes to this for you or me, let's love those brethren who try to awaken us to our serious lost condition and bear up under their chastening!

Endures All Things

"Love has the patience to endure the fault it sees but cannot cure." Love will help us to endure the evil and false accusations without being filled with resentment or revenge. We are called upon to endure persecution, trials, and tribulations and to look for the good that can come out of such.

Jas. 1:2-4 _____

Matt. 5:10-12 _____

Love also will not stoop to the level of the unrighteous; and it will cover the faults and weaknesses of others when possible. Love endures the misunderstandings of others.

Eph. 4:31-32 _____

Unfortunately, all wrongs cannot be set right! But love will do its part in helping to set them right by its patience and endurance; and not allowing hate, bitterness or malice to corrupt our hearts.

"With God's help, we can endure fire, water, devils, lions, evil men, losses, grieved hearts; and, even a world that does not seem to understand us."

However, in the strict sense of the world there are some things we should not and will not tolerate. The Apostle Paul protested against wrongful treatment at times.

Acts 23:1-5 _____

Love will not endure: **false teaching, blasphemy against God, the Church, or the Word of God.**

The Apostle Peter, by inspiration, spoke out against the Jews that had Jesus crucified unjustly.

Acts 2:23 _____

Love will help us to endure whatever is brought into our lives!

Questions for Discussion

True or False

- _____ 1. To suffer long, bear all things, and endure all things are all talking about Patience.
- _____ 2. We just have to live with some things or people that may never change.
- _____ 3. A reason for needing patience is because of the way people act or think that is different from me.
- _____ 4. Love does not require that we make allowances for peoples' weaknesses.
- _____ 5. One big danger that the Christian faces is that of stooping to be like those who differ with us.
- _____ 6. There is a limit to what we can bear up under.

- _____ 7. Loving some people is not a matter of the will but a question of how I feel.
- _____ 8. To bear all things indicate that there is no limitation to what we can bear with in our lives.
- _____ 9. Proper withdrawal of fellowship of an unrepentant Christian is not being patient with people.
- _____ 10. Chastening is love being shown.

- _____ 11. Love helps us to endure the faults we see in others.

- _____ 12. Love helps to set things right because it is patient.

- _____ 13. There are some things that love must not endure.

Lesson Five

"A Person of Faith"

"Love believes all things!" The word "belief" or "faith" carries with it the idea of "trust" or to "put confidence in." To believe in someone is to have confidence in them. In this context, the word seems to take on a little different connotation. It is the attitude of being eager or desirous of wanting to believe the best about others. We put our trust in people and believe their intentions are good, noble, sincere, just, etc. Love helps us to believe the best about people, not the worst! Love helps us not to be quick to censor or condemn people without first knowing the facts. We believe the best until the facts say otherwise.

Prov. 10:12 _____

1 Pet. 4:8 _____

Love helps us to find a possible good explanation for things or peoples' actions. It is to be charitable in our interpretations of another's actions or words.

God's Belief in Us

Even though God knows all about mankind and their weaknesses; yet, He still believes in us and the possibilities of what we can become. This is the reason why He sent His Son. This is the reason for His willingness to forgive. Was God naive to believe in human-kind? I believe the answer has to be "NO!" He knows that the majority of people would not believe and obey His Son; but He still did it for the ones who would do so.

We also know that not everyone we put our trust in will do right and that only a few will live up to the faith we have in them. We must not let the people who let us down destroy our ability to trust in people or we will become very negative in our outlook towards people. Trusting and believing in people can bring great rewards even from the few.

Matt. 7:13-14 _____

Jn. 8:47 _____

God's love for His creatures caused Him to **dare** to put His trust in us; and it has paid big dividends to the saving of many souls. God is our example to follow. We, too, must put our trust in our fellow-human beings.

Jesus and Man's Faith in Him

Jesus came to earth as a Savior for man, not a Judge to condemn us for all eternity. He believed in us or He never would have come and died like He did! His great challenge was not only to be the sacrificial Lamb of God, but to get men to put their trust in Him and His ability to save them. It is obvious that His death would have been worthless without man's faith in Him.

Jn. 3:16 _____

Of all the beings in this universe, the one that man should obviously believe in should be God! But most people really do not trust in Him and show it by rejecting His Son and His Word. But Jesus had an even greater challenge to get people to believe in Him as the Son of God—even though He is Deity as well.

John 14:1 _____

John 14:11 _____

Jesus challenged men to believe in Him!

Matt. 8:13 _____

Matt. 9:28 _____

Matt. 21:22 _____

We all could say along with the father of the demon possessed son: "*Lord help my unbelief!*"

Mark 9:23-24 _____

Why is it so hard for people to put their full trust in Jesus' Deity, His ability to save, or His promises of eternal life? Why won't people believe in his intentions being good, as well as, His ability to carry out every promise? We believe the answer is a simple one—they simply do not have "love" in their hearts for God, nor His Son! The reason we say this is because love "believes all things!" It is eager and anxious to believe the best about a person—unless the facts show otherwise.

Are Christians to be Naive?

Should a Christian "fall for" everything a person says or believe everything he is told? We believe the answer is a positive "NO!" God does not expect us to be naive, but He does expect us to put trust in men.

1 John 4:1 _____

1 Thess. 5:21 _____

Eph. 4:14 _____

While Love helps us to believe the very best about a person; yet, facts can become know that will make it impossible to believe that his intentions are honorable. It is love that helps us to find a possible good explanation for things or peoples' actions until the full facts are made known. We should never want to believe the worst about a person. We should be slow to criticize, but quick to praise. We need to see the bright side, not the dark side. We are to be like little children—they tend to put trust in every one until their hearts are corrupted by men's untrustworthiness.

Prov. 29:20 _____

Christians certainly must not wink at sin, but we should strive to put the best interpretation on things as much as possible and not be too quick to assign wrong motives for others' actions or words.

The following Scriptures certainly show that we have to draw a line with some people concerning our trust in them.

1 John 4:1 _____

1 Thess. 5:21 _____

Eph. 4:14 _____

Concluding Thoughts

We want to believe all things, we strive to believe all things, and we tend to believe all things unless there are concrete reasons not to do so. But we are convinced that this expression is dealing more with believing in people even when they haven't been honest or dependable. They need someone to believe in them to motivate them to keep on trying to do things that are right. If God had not believed in us.....where would we be now? Thankfully He and His Son did have confidence in us and gave us an opportunity to have life and that more abundantly!

Questions for Discussion

True or False

- _____ 1. Love helps us to believe the best about people, not the worst.
- _____ 2. I should want to believe the best about people even though they are not perfect.
- _____ 3. People can so act that they are considered untrustworthy.
- _____ 4. "Love covers a multitude of sins" means that we should accept people in spite of their sins.
- _____ 5. God has trusted in us even though we have proven ourselves to be untrustworthy.
- _____ 6. Of all the beings in this universe, the one that man should obviously believe in should be God.
- _____ 7. Believing in Jesus should be easier than believing in God.
- _____ 8. Is it correct to say: "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief?"
- _____ 9. Christians are so "naive" and fall for everything others say.
- _____ 10. To be exhorted to "try the spirits" should tell us that it is not wrong to disbelieve some people.
- _____ 11. If we have confidence in people, we will wink at their sin.
- _____ 12. The irresponsible are in greater need of our faith in them than the responsible people.

Lesson Six

"A Person of Hope"

"Love Hopes all things!" This statement needs to be seen in contrast to what is often called "Murphy's Law"—*"If anything can go wrong, it will."* Another saying that has existed for a long time is similar—*"Always expect the worst and you won't be disappointed."* A wrong outlook on life or the future can contribute to one's misery and unhappiness. We need to have a positive outlook, not a negative one....thus, **"Love hopes all things."** Learn to expect the best outcome in life, and in our fellowman, and in the future; rather than, looking at the future with anticipating evil and foreboding.

The usual use of the word "hope" is that of expectation, anticipation, and confidence. In this context in 1 Cor. 13:4-8, it seems to be emphasizing how we look at things, people, and events. It emphasizes the need to expect the best things in life to happen, not the worst! We are called upon to put our trust in God, even though things may look bleak at the moment. Those who lack love usually anticipate the worst to happen and the future to be dim and foreboding.

Our Hope Needs to be in God, 1st!

We cannot have a more solid foundation to build on than having our hope set on God!

Ps. 78:7 _____

Joel 3:16 _____

The righteous have this hope, but the unjust man's hope will perish and is in vain; and so also is the hope of the hypocrite.

Prov. 10:28 _____

Prov. 11:7 _____

Job 8:13 _____

Our Hope Comes Through Christ

To Jesus, Heaven is a sure thing, a fact, a reality, a certainty, and therefore has no doubt about it. Jesus did not even use the word hope in regards to the Christian's future reward—it is a done deal! We hope for an ultimate reward in heaven because we have not seen it nor experience it. Man hopes, but Jesus knew! Jesus' death, burial, resurrection, and ascension on high has given man an assurance upon which to build our hope.

Rom. 8:20-24 _____

Col. 1:5, 27 _____

2 Cor. 3:12 _____

1 Jn. 3:2-3 _____

1. This hope is based on the message of the Gospel (Col. 1:23).
2. Our assurance is in the resurrection of Christ (Acts 23:6).
3. It is a hope of being glorified some day (Col. 1:27).
4. It is called a "living" hope (1 Pet. 1:3).
5. It is laid up in heaven for us (Col. 1:5).
6. It is a hope of eternal life (Tit. 1:2).
7. We need to rejoice in this hope (Rom. 12:12).
8. Not be ashamed of this hope (Rom. 5:5).
9. We must lay hold onto this hope (Heb. 6:18).
10. We need to abound in this hope (Rom. 15:13).

Encouragement in this Hope

Please notice in the following passages the encouragement that is given to us concerning our hope as a Christian.

Rom. 8:28 _____

Rom. 8:32 _____

Rom. 8:35 _____

Rom. 8:37 _____

Phil. 4:13 _____

1 Pet. 2:5 _____

1 Pet. 2:9-10 _____

God wants His people to have a good outlook on life and what the future holds for us. Generally speaking, all should turn out well. We need to have a positive anticipation for the future ahead of us. Even if we suffer persecution or become martyrs for the cause of Christ, the future for us is bright! He definitely does not want us to be "dooms-dayers" or have a gloomy outlook on life, or to anticipate the worst.

Concluding Thoughts

Just as love "believes all things," "bears all things," "endures all things;" love also "hopes all things." With God on our side and for us, who can successfully be against us? Why shouldn't we have a good outlook on life and what the future has in store for us? It is to hope for the best for all. Notice the following translations in their efforts to understand this verse:

Moffatt—"always hopeful"

Berkley—"hopes under all circumstances"

Williams—"it keeps up hope in everything."

Simple English—"always hopes for the best."

Quote: *"The Christian will apply the principle of positive anticipation to all associations, public and private, to what is said and done in his presence and to what is said and done in his absence, especially, to those things which he has 'only heard.'"*

God has given us every reason to have a positive anticipation about people, events, and the future.

Questions for Discussion

True or False

- _____ 1. A person can hold to "Murphy's Law" and still hope all things.
- _____ 2. It is great comfort to expect things to go wrong and thereby not be disappointed.
- _____ 3. It is wrong to have a negative outlook on life.
- _____ 4. Real hope is based on a firm belief and hope in God.
- _____ 5. The unjust man's hope will perish as well as the hypocrite's hope.
- _____ 6. Jesus never used the word for "hope" in all of His discourses.
- _____ 7. Hope is not something that we see or experience, but rather we anticipate such.
- _____ 8. Our hope is based on Jesus and the Gospel.
- _____ 9. Christians are told to abound in this hope.
- _____ 10. Our hope is a "dead" hope now, but will become a "living" hope when we get to heaven.
- _____ 11. God's promises make our hope "more real" if we believe in Him and His promises.
- _____ 12. A gloomy outlook on life is not what the Christian should have.

Lesson Seven

"Does Not Envy"

In our first six lessons on **The Desired Christian Personality** we looked at the six "positive" expressions of Love! Now, we want to look at the six "negative" expressions that **do not** correctly express love! These expressions or non-expressions of love are found in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

Quote: *"Pride, envy, and avarice are the three sparks that have set the hearts of all on fire."* Do you agree with this statement? If so, why?

Defined: *"It is to be unhappy with the success or blessings of others."* It is to look, but look with ill-will towards others. If envy is not dealt with, it can grow into bitterness and hatred of others. Envy is identified with base things such as—holding grudges, being jealous, having an evil eye, being discontent, hurting others, etc. Jealousy may fear losing what it does have, but envy feels pain at seeing what others have. It is at first an attitude, but leads to overt bad actions toward others. It is condemned in the listing of sins.

Rom. 1:29 _____

Gal. 5:21 _____

The Outcome of Envy

Our actions are usually governed by our attitude or spirit within our hearts. Envy, as an attitude, will lead to many very undesirable results. It can divide friends, families, communities, and nations. It can lead to destruction and death physically—but primarily spiritually! Look at the following passages to see how the outcome of envy is described:

Prov. 27:4 _____

Job. 5:2 _____

Prov. 14:30 _____

Jas. 3:14-16 _____

A person may dislike or hate someone and not fully realize that it may be envy behind it all. We can envy a person's clothes, car, house, money, success, friendships with others, self-confidence, abilities, etc.

Admonitions against Envy

Look at the following passages that let the Christian know that envy can have no place in his life.

- Rom. 13:13** _____
- 1 Cor. 3:1-3** _____
- _____
- 2 Cor. 12:20** _____
- Gal. 5:26** _____
- 1 Pet. 2:1** _____

How do you get rid of envy? If it is wrong, sinful, destructive, then we need to get it out of our hearts. The answer is simple, that which gets rid of envy is love! Love does not envy! Love helps us to be happy with the success of others and not to be discontent. Notice what the two references below show that love will do:

Matt. 5:43-45 _____

Rom. 12:14-21 _____

Love does not grieve when others are blessed, but rejoices with them! Love does not become bitter because we do not have what others have. Love is not frustrated by the success of others.

Examples of Envy in the Bible

There is no better place to go to than the Bible to see examples of envy and its devastating results.

1. Cain and Abel. (Gen. 4:1-8). Both boys brought their sacrifice to God. Both were giving recognition to the God who had brought them into existence. But Cain's offering was flawed, but Abel's was acceptable. Cain did not like God's decision in the matter—evidently thinking that his offering should have been accepted. Cain was envious or jealous of Abel's offering being recognized and accepted when his was not. The outcome of his bad attitude was---murder! He killed his own brother over envy.

1 Jn. 3:12 _____

2. Saul and David. (1 Sam. 18:8-9). King Saul was already having problems with God because of his disobedience. David came on the scene as a young man, but a man of faith and courage. He became so popular with the people that Saul was sure David would soon become the new King. He became so envious and jealous of David's success that he tried to kill him on several occasions.

3. Jesus and Jewish Leaders. (Matt. 27:18). Jesus was becoming so popular with the people that the leaders feared the outcome for themselves. Out of envy, they plotted to kill him and succeeded in getting Him put to death by the Romans. When Jesus was brought before Pilate, the Scriptures state that Pilate knew that the Jews had delivered Jesus out of Envy.

4. The Apostles and Jewish Leaders. (Acts 5:17-18). The Apostles were having so much success with the people that the leaders of the Jews were fearful of the outcome—especially for themselves. They put them into prison for a short period of time hoping to get them to stop preaching. All of this came out of their envy or jealousy (indignation) of the success of the Apostles.

5. Paul and the Jews at Thessalonica. (Acts 17:1-9). Many of the people at Thessalonica responded to the Gospel, but among the Jews some were envious of the success of the Gospel and wanted to stop the preaching. To save themselves, Paul and Silas left the city by night.

6. Problems with the Church at Corinth. (1 Cor. 3:1-3). The Apostle pointed out that the church, instead of acting out of love, was acting out of a spirit of envy that had led to strife and division.

Concluding Thoughts

Envy can find root in anyone's heart where love is not present as it should be. The Apostle told about some preachers in Rome that were preaching Christ out of envy and strife, selfish ambition and not sincerely. The danger of envy is all around us. Christians need to fill their hearts with God's love to keep envy out. We are commanded not to envy one another (Gal. 5:26).

Questions for Discussion

True or False

- _____ 1. The envious person is unhappy at the success or blessings of others.
- _____ 2. Envy, itself, is not condemned, but the wrong actions it can produce.
- _____ 3. Our actions are governed by our attitudes.

- _____ 4. Envy is described as "rottenness to the bones."

- _____ 5. Dislike of a person has no connection with envy.

- _____ 6. Envy is condemned along with malice, deceit, hypocrisy, and evil-speaking.
- _____ 7. Love returns good for evil, while envy results in evil.

- _____ 8. The Bible says that Cain was envious of his brother Abel.
- _____ 9. King Saul had good reasons for being envious of David.
- _____ 10. The Scriptures state that Pilate "knew" that Jesus was delivered because of envy.
- _____ 11. Envy was back of much of the problems at Corinth.

- _____ 12. Even preachers can preach Christ for the wrong reason according to the Apostle Paul.

Lesson Eight

"Not Puffed Up"

We are looking at the negative side of love—what it will not do! In this lesson, we can see that love is not puffed up! The following list is how different versions translate this phrase:

- a) "love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up"
- b) "love is never boastful"
- c) "love is not arrogant"
- d) "love is not conceited"
- e) "love does not put on airs"
- f) "love does not cherish inflated ideas of its own importance"

As you can see there are several synonyms that the translators used to help us to understand what love will not do. The following Scriptures can also be helpful in giving additional ideas.

- 2 Tim. 3:4** _____
- 1 Tim. 6:17** _____
- 1 Tim. 3:6** _____
- Prov. 8:13** _____
- Phil. 2:3** _____
- Jere. 48:29** _____

There are also additional synonyms or phrases that help to define the concept of "pride."

- a) "does not hold inflated ideas of one's own importance"
- b) "does not brag"
- c) "Does not magnify or display its real or supposed advantages over others."
- d) "Makes no boast of its own work or accomplishments"
- e) "looking down on others"
- f) "Silent about any advantage over others"
- g) "an inflated ego"
- h) "an excessive amount of self-esteem"
- i) "to raise up self or run down others to show superiority"
- j) "to boast of one's education, wealth, abilities in order to show one's superiority"
- k) "to use one's talents for self-glorification"
- l) "the desire to impress others"

It should be easy to see that there can be no real loving relationship with God or men when one's mind is so fixed or filled with self! The opposite of pride would be humility.

Eph. 4:2 _____

Phil. 2:3-4 _____

2 Chron. 32:26 _____

Love will cause a person to be humble, not prideful! Pride usually shows contempt or disregard of others, but love wants to bless and serve others. How do you feel about the following quotation?

"Love receives its endowments with gratitude; regards them as a gift from God; and is disposed to employ them not in vain boasting, but in purposes of utility, in doing good to all others on as wide a scale as possible."

Boasters usually become known more for their boasting than their accomplishments. The person that does good is the least likely to boast. Love develops esteem for others and raises our value for them.

Rom. 12:10 _____

How do you feel about these quotes?

"The less people speak of their greatness, the more we think of it."

"Where boasting ends, there dignity begins."

God's advice to us—*"Put a seal on your lips and forget what you have done."*

God's View of Pride

Prov. 6:16-17 _____

Prov. 29:23 _____

Dan. 4:37 _____

1 Jn. 2:16 _____

Rom. 1:30-32 _____

Jas. 4:6 _____

The Outcome of Pride

The Bible has quite a bit to say about the outcome of pride in our lives. It is often illustrated in the lives of people to impress upon us the reality of what is being said about pride.

- 1. It caused Nebuchadnezzar to fall. (Dan. 4:28-33)**
- 2. It caused Haman's destruction. (Esther 3:5-6; 7:10)**

3. It caused the Devil's fall. (1 Tim. 3:6)
4. Pride characterized the great "falling away." (2 Thess. 2:3-4)
5. Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. (Prov. 16:18)
6. Pride brings shame. (Prov. 11:2)
7. Pride brings strife. (Prov. 13:10)
8. Pride can deceive. (Obadiah 3)

Concluding Thoughts

We must not let attainments or position go to our heads (Matt. 20:25-28) but remain humble servants of God. Jesus, again, is our great example of humility (Phil. 2:1-8). God not only resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble (Jas. 4:6). When we humble ourselves before God, He will lift us up (Jas. 4:10). Let us learn, as God's children, to esteem others better than ourselves (Phil. 2:3). Love will enable us to be this kind of a person.

Questions for Discussion

True or False

- _____ 1. Boasting is a form of pride.
- _____ 2. To be "high-minded" is to think on higher (spiritual) things.
- _____ 3. A person can be prideful even if he doesn't boast about himself.
- _____ 4. It is impossible to have a close relationship with God when one is so fixed or filled with self.
- _____ 5. Selfish ambition is not the same as pride.
- _____ 6. Pride usually shows contempt or disregard of others.
- _____ 7. Boasters are known more for their boasting than accomplishments.
- _____ 8. The person who does good is the least likely to boast.
- _____ 9. Where boasting ends, there dignity begins.
- _____ 10. God cannot hate pride, but He doesn't like it and its outcome.
- _____ 11. Pride is listed as one of many sins that alienate us from God.
- _____ 12. We know that the Devil fell because of his pride.
- _____ 13. God does not offer grace to the proud.

Lesson Nine

"Not Rude"

We continue with what the Bible says that love will **not** do! *"Love does not behave itself unseemly."* Our one word that tries to stress this is that love is not **rude!** Other translations state:

- a) **"love is not unmannerly"**
- b) **"Love is not indecent"**
- c) **"Love is not offensive to others"**

If love is not rude; then, it must be courteous, polite, or tactful—showing concern for others. Love will not act disrespectful of others, but will have a delicate sensitivity for the feeling of others. This is love expressed in little things that help to bond people together. To speak the Gospel in an offensive manner does not help a person "receive the truth gladly;" but probably the very opposite. It is hard to convince a person we really care for them when we are discourteous and rude in our presentation of the truth. The Gospel is to be preached with love (not rudeness) (Eph. 4:15).

Rudeness or Courtesy may vary with time and the particular culture you may be involved with. For instance, it may be courteous to take your shoes off in one culture, but in another it may be rude to do so. Christians will strive to show love in whatever culture they are in.

We show courtesy to people in positions of authority by using proper terms that denote courtesy. Even though men may have established these over a period of time, the Christian will observe these courtesies because of his love of people. Not to show respect is looked upon as "being rude!"

What do you think of this quote?

"Small courtesies are the oil that helps to ease the friction of social contact."

Some people may think that they are too busy or too important to bother with such courtesies and are willing to be classified as "rude!" As a Christian we may be obedient to God's will in a lot of things, but still be rude or discourteous towards others about us. But God's Word still says that love is not rude!

Even when we look at such "minor details" as table manners, the Christian should strive to not be offensive. What if you were eating with someone in your home and that person ate his food with his hands, with food dribbling all over the table and himself and he was making noises like an animal eating—how would **you** feel?

Love is not Rude—Will not Offend!

If love is not rude, then it will show good manners, be courteous, be polite, and be tactful—showing concern for people. Some people who claim to be a Christian seem to take pride in being tactless, crude, unkind, and insensitive to even their fellow-Christians. But if they have the love of God in their hearts, they will not be guilty of these things. Love is sensitive to how others feel.

2 Tim. 2:24-25 _____

To be tactful is not to deceive people, but it is to avoid misunderstandings and mistrust. How do you like the following quote?

"We do not tactfully hide the truth, but tactfully declare the truth."

We need to show courtesy and respect to most of all God! Then, we should be respectful of rulers, older people, parents, etc.

Heb. 12:9 _____

Eph. 6:1-3 _____

1 Pet. 2:13-17 _____

Offend or Offense is another term that probably should be included in this discussion on Rudeness. Jesus came into the world and became an offense to people, not because He wanted it or didn't care about people's feelings; but, people were offended in His message and claims (Isa. 8:4; Gal. 4:16). There is another concept involved that would be included in our study on rudeness—that is, not caring about people or their feelings.

Rom. 14:20 _____

Rom. 16:17 _____

Matt. 18:6-7 _____

1 Cor. 8:13 _____

Notice the emphasis upon speaking or acting in such a way that you do not cause a brother to stumble. If we love one another, we will be concerned about each other and try to avoid anything that would offend. A haughty spirit will lead to an offense and making it hard to be reconciled to one another.

Prov. 18:19 _____

Prov. 16:18 _____

It is important that we do not offend.....**even in things that are lawful or not forbidden!** The Apostle's statement about this is very revealing to us all.....

2 Cor. 6:3 _____

We should have the same spirit as the Apostle did!

Concluding Thoughts

The Apostle Paul stated about the matter of offense again in Acts 24:16:

"I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men." God's command for us in this regard is: *"Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God."* (1 Cor. 10:32). Paul also desired that God's people be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ (Phil. 1:10).

God's people must not be rude, unseemly, discourteous, or offensive. This is God's love being expressed in "little" things!

Questions for Discussion

True or False

- _____ 1. A person's table manners have nothing to do with our study.
- _____ 2. To be disrespectful of someone is not behaving unseemly.
- _____ 3. My job as a Christian is to speak the truth and the rest is up to the person who hears.
- _____ 4. Rudeness and courtesy may vary with time and culture.
- _____ 5. To show respect to a person in authority is not the same as being courteous to them.
- _____ 6. I am too busy to be concerned about people's feelings.
- _____ 7. Being tactful and courteous is a command of God.
- _____ 8. Being tactful is just another way to be dishonest.
- _____ 9. A mature Christian will be courteous to others and strive not to offend them or their conscious.
- _____ 10. Causing a brother to stumble is an offense and a sin.

Lesson Ten

"Does Not Seek Its Own"

Our fourth negative that love will not do is generally labeled as *"Love is not Selfish!"* Other versions express it the following ways:

"Never selfish"

"Does not insist on its own way"

"Does not insist on its rights"

"Never self-seeking"

"Does not pursue selfish aims"

"Is not interested only in himself"

The idea seems to be that love does not seek things for itself at the expense of others. Love is willing to forego their own interests or rights for the good of others. Love puts others first. Most of us are familiar with the concept:

"God first; others 2nd; and self last!"

We again are reminded of what Paul quotes from Jesus: *"It is more blessed to give than to receive."* (Acts 20:35). Of all of the examples that Deity has set before us—this is the most obvious! God gave His Son for us! Christ gave up Heaven to become a man and die for us! (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:6). We have a great challenge to follow their example in this matter. The more unselfish we become, the more we are like God! The following two passages state this concept so clearly:

1 Cor. 10:24 _____

Phil. 2:3-4 _____

Selfishness

Synonyms are often helpful in getting a better idea behind a word. The following are some synonyms of selfishness: **Self-interest, Self-centeredness, egotism, egoism, and egocentricity.** A little baby comes into the world—helpless, needing constant attention. One or both parents will have to sacrifice themselves (time, energy, interest, activities, etc) in order to care for the baby. It helps to force the parents to grow up, mature, get out of self, and put the baby's interest or welfare before their own. To grow up, in reality, is to become less self-centered! The more unselfish we become, the less we dwell on self. What do you think of this quote?

"Self-seeking is a major cause of unhappiness, loneliness, and despair."

What do you think of this quote?

"If you want to be miserable, think about yourself, about what you want, what you like, what respect people should show to you, and what people think of you."

It should be obvious that an unselfish person will not seek his own happiness exclusively or mainly; and, certainly, it does not seek its own way to the injury of others.

Self-Denial

In order to become a follower of Jesus, one must begin the hard road, but the glorious road, to self-denial. You can't be saved your way, or other men's way, but only God's way! You either deny yourself and obey him or you will be lost forever.

John 14:6 _____

Matt. 16:24-26 _____

Gal. 2:20 _____

Rom. 6:6-10 _____

Living the Christian life is a life of putting to death the works of the flesh that causes separation from God.

Col. 3:5-6 _____

Titus 2:12 _____

The rewards of self-denial are great:

Mk. 10:28-31 _____

Phil. 3:7-11 _____

If we try to hold on to our life in living it the way we want to, we will lose our lives with God eternally. It is when we deny self, lose or give up living the way we want to and live the way God decrees, that we will then gain our life.

Matt. 10:39 _____

Jn. 12:24-25 _____

Selfishness and Marriage

Selfishness can be the "death-nail" to a marriage! Selfishness is a sign of emotional and spiritual immaturity. Parents generally try to teach their children to share and respect the rights of others, but fall into the same way of acting as their children. The challenge of marriage is not only the adjustments that have to be made in order to live together in close harmony, but to also become an unselfish person—putting one's mate before him or her self. This is indicated in the following verses:

Eph. 5:25 _____
Eph. 5:28 _____
Eph. 5:33 _____

Godly love is the fulfilling of the Law of God! Another way to put it would be: *"Godly love will help us to become more and more unselfish."*

Selfishness and the Church

If unselfishness can help a marriage, you know it can help the church. The church is made up of people who have matured to the point that they are concerned for others; while some are or have remained immature and think only of what they want, their desires, their ease, etc. The challenge is for the "strong" or "mature" to bear with the immaturities of the weak, so that they can be motivated to "grow-up" or mature in Christ also. If you have all "weak" in a congregation.....you could be in deep trouble! Unselfish service to others should be the goal that every Christian is seeking in their lives.

Gal. 6:1-2 _____
1 Jn. 3:16 _____

Closing Thoughts

Godly love is basically the solution to all of man's problem with other human beings. God is the ultimate unselfish being! Our goal should be to become as much like Him as we possibly can—totally unselfish! How do you feel about this being your goal in life?

Questions for Discussion

True or False

- _____ 1. Love should help us forego our own interests or rights for the good of others.
- _____ 2. Happiness is found in giving up self, rather than being selfish.
- _____ 3. We are commanded to seek the well-being of others.
- _____ 4. Egocentricity is to be self-centered!
- _____ 5. Self-seeking is a major cause of unhappiness, loneliness, and despair.
- _____ 6. An unselfish person does not seek his own way to the hurt of others.
- _____ 7. Unselfishness and self-denial is the same thing.
- _____ 8. A person cannot follow Christ without denying himself.
- _____ 9. To be crucified with Christ is another way of saying that a person has put to death his own way and wants to follow Christ.
- _____ 10. The rewards of self-denial are only after this life is over.
- _____ 11. Selfishness must be overcome if a marriage is to succeed.
- _____ 12. The wife must submit to her husband's will, but the husband does not have to submit to the wife's will.
- _____ 13. To be strong, mature, or unselfish is the same thing.
- _____ 14. Selfishness in the church can be the cause of most of its problems.

Lesson Eleven

"Is Not Easily Provoked"

The Greek word here is translated "to provoke" or "to irritate." Evidently, the word "easily" is not in the original Greek text, but the translators felt that it is understood. All of us have to deal with provocations or irritations, but the real issue here is how we deal with such or how we handle such. Are we easily upset, irritated, or provoked by people or events? Or, can we remain "calm, cool, and collected" in the midst of such? Look at the way other versions handle this expression:

"Never provoked"

"Not quick to take offense"

"It is not irritable or resentful"

"It is not touchy"

"Is even-tempered"

We need to always keep in mind that "Godly Love" is concerned for the welfare of other persons. We are to look out for the interests of other people besides ourselves. When we say that *"Love is good-tempered or even-tempered,"* it is a way of indicating that love helps us to be in control of our temper or even our anger.

If a Christian were to take everything said or done to him as a personal affront and react quickly to it in a worldly way, his influence would be gone in the eyes of those who witness such. Usually, the problem with this type of person is—too little Godly love and too much love of self! Christians need to mature to the point where they are not over-sensitive, embittered or enraged by abuse, insult or personal injury. We should not be susceptible to violent anger or exasperation in our dealings with others. We should be serious, calm, and patient. When we are injured, we govern our temper and restrain and subdue our feelings.

Prov. 16:32 _____

Jas. 1:19-20 _____

Be Angry and Not Be Angry!

All of us have to deal with the feelings of unfairness, unjustness, or evil done to us or others. The very way we are made and our normal thinking is to react to these wrong things. If you are watching a movie that is showing a person doing some terrible things wrong to another person, you would probably have some strong feelings about that "wicked" person and that he should be punished. When he is punished, there is a sense of justice done and you no longer have those strong feelings. This is normal and most people go through this process many times in their lives.

When we examine Scriptures concerning anger, we can see a possible contradiction between them. One set of Scriptures tell us to put away anger (along with other wrong attitudes).

Eph. 4:31 _____

But just a few verses before the above, the Scriptures tell us that if we get angry, don't sin!

Eph. 4:26 _____

Is anger wrong? Is anger a sin? There is a sense in which anger would be normal, natural, and justified.

Acts 17:16 _____

We should be provoked by sin and its consequences in our lives. We should not let such provocation cause us to be harsh, bitter, or resentful toward anyone; but we should oppose sin.

Why do the Scriptures emphasize the need to be slow to anger, if anger is a sin or wrong?

Prov. 15:18 _____

Eccl. 7:9 _____

Titus 1:7 _____

Is it okay to be angry, but not sin? Is anger justified in some situations, but wrong in others?

Our translators probably have gone through the same line of questioning in order to come up with the way they translated this phrase—*"not easily provoked."* All of us get provoked at wrong, evil, wickedness, etc., but how do we feel toward the one that did the provoking? We must love the provoker! We must even love our enemies who definitely provoke us. But we should not be so easily provoked by little things that can cause us to lash out at people, even though they are wrong in their actions. The dangers of anger are real! So many evils have been committed because of anger. Some people lose their sensibilities in their anger and say and do some very harmful and hurtful things.

Eph. 4:26 _____

Jesus again is our perfect example of how to deal with unfair, unjust, and uncalled for provocation.

1 Peter 2:21-23 _____

He wholly submitted His will to the Father's will—even in a very difficult situation. He would not be provoked to strike back at the persons who were mistreating Him. Our heavenly Father is long-suffering to His rebellious creatures—he is not quick to anger or wrath like men. He wants to give men time to come to repentance.

2 Pet. 3:9 _____

Prov. 15:1 _____

God's love in our hearts will help us to treat our fellow-man the same way that God does--even in hard circumstances. This would be the ultimate!

1 Pet. 4:12-16 _____

Concluding Thoughts

A Christian should grow to the point where he is not easily provoked to anger. While the Temperament of people may play a role somewhat in all of this; regardless, we are to be slow to anger and put such out of our lives as quickly as possible. Our soul and the souls of others are at stake in how well we are matured in these matters.

Questions for Discussion

True or False

- _____ 1. The word "easily" is not in the original Greek Text and needs to be looked at carefully to see if it is justified.
- _____ 2. "Not quick to take offense" is a good translation.
- _____ 3. An "even-tempered" person is one that is in control of his emotions.
- _____ 4. The easily provoked person probably has too little Godly love and too much love of self.
- _____ 5. The Christian is told to put away anger, but he is also told that if he has anger don't sin.
- _____ 6. One of the qualification for an elder is that he is not to have anger in his heart.
- _____ 7. Anger is a sin.
- _____ 8. The Christian must not allow someone to provoke him to anger, but rather do good to him that tries to provoke you.
- _____ 9. So much evil has been caused by being expressing their anger towards others.
- _____ 10. Jesus would not allow his persecutors to provoke him to anger.

Lesson Twelve

"Thinks No Evil"

It is interesting to observe how translators have to work at trying to find the right concept and wording in their translation from the Greek into English. One of the best ways to see this problem is to look at the various versions and see how they treat the same word or phrase. The NKJV uses the above phrase ("*thinks no evil*"); but notice these others:

"Never reckons up her wrongs"

"Love keeps no score of wrongs"

"It does not keep account of evil"

"Does not hold grudges"

The Greek word has four basic usage:

- 1) To reckon
- 2) To place to the account of, to charge with
- 3) To reason, argue, to infer, conclude
- 4) To think, suppose

From the above, it is e beautiful, not the ugly. He looks for the noble, not the ignoble—the bright and cheerful, not the dark and gloomy—the hopeful instead of the despairing.

Thinking the Best About People

This comes back to having faith in people that they can, will, and hopeful want to do good and not evil. To impart evil motives to a person may indicate that you have a problem with that person. No one is perfect—all of us make mistakes. It should behoove us to make some allowances for others—as we do for ourselves! Why not:

1—Put the best possible construction on the conduct of others?

2—Be blind to their faults, mistakes, weaknesses, or oddities?

3—Even when you see the sin, you do not crush the sinner but seek to save him?

Love desires to believe the best about a person, not the worst; and is slow to question the goodness of any man's heart. But probably above all, he does not keep account of the injuries he receives, and tries to hold no malice against the person.

Have you ever heard of people who literally write down all the bad things that are done to them by others, so that they can bring it up at the proper time. This can be done mentally, but some people literally write the things downso they won't forget!

One translation of this Greek phrase is straight to the point: "*No ledger keeper!*" He tries to pay no attention to suffered wrongs or hurt feelings. He does not hold a grudge and has no intent of "balancing the account"—getting even! Christianity is based on mercy, not JUSTICE! God is merciful and gladly willing to forgive and forget wrongs against Himself. Love is grieved at any kind of wrong doing. Love also is concerned for others and it does not wish for bad things to happen to anyone. Our joy is the downfall of wrong, not people!

1 Cor. 6:6-8 _____

2 Cor. 7:2-3 _____

Job's friends (?) might be a good illustration of "thinking evil" or imputing evil to Job because of what he was suffering. They certainly were convinced of his guiltiness! Instead of listening to him or even believing in him, they condemned him with their thinking.

Job 19:13-19 _____

asy to see why most versions emphasize that love does not keep score of wrongs, or keep account of evil, nor does it hold grudges. Love is what the overly-suspicious person needs. In an atmosphere of faith and trust....men will expand and find needed encouragement. So, love thinks the best of people. It does not impute bad motives to others. It sees the bright side of things. It puts the best construction on others' actions. Love is forgiving and does not hold a grudge. Many people are unhappy and are unable to get along with others because they keep score.

The Guileless Person

Jesus said of Nathanael: *"Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit (guile)!"* (John 1:47). He is open, readable, and he is who he is, not who he pretends to be. He does not put on a front in order to deceive people about himself. I am not sure that this is exactly the same type of person that our lesson is talking about, but some evidently do make a connection.

It is obvious that what one thinks is important. Jesus said: *"For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man....."* (Matt. 15:19-20). What we think about others definitely can affect our actions or non-actions toward them. This seems to be dealing with the root of the problem. Keeping score of the evil of others is just an outcome of the state of mind of the person. If he suspects no evil, he will have no reason to keep account of evil. This person looks for the good and

1 Cor. 12:14-27

These verses in 1 Corinthians 12 certainly help to illustrate the right kind of thinking about one another. We are members of the same body (the Church of our Lord); each has its proper function to make the body work correctly; concern is shown when any member suffers; we all rejoice when any member is honored. We not only think the best about one another but we want the best for one another. We are members of the same body!

Concluding Thoughts

Listen to how the **Living Bible** states what love will do: *"If you love someone, you will be loyal to him—no matter what the cost! You will always believe in him, always expect the best of him, and always stand your ground defending him."* That sounds pretty good, don't you think? Is that what you would like for someone to do for you?

Prov. 10:12 _____

1 Pet. 4:8 _____

"Love covers a multitude of sins!" When God forgives, our sins are covered! What a blessing! But also, what a blessing to be around people who have faith in us, who do not impute evil

purposes in our actions or even our wrong actions. What a blessing to have true friends who think the best of us!

Questions for Discussion

True or False

- _____ 1. I believe the translators did justice to this phrase in this lesson...."Thinks No Evil."
- _____ 2. Overly suspicious people are lacking in their love for others.
- _____ 3. To impute wrong motives to others is sinful.
- _____ 4. Love is forgiving, while hate keeps an account of the wrongs.
- _____ 5. Unhappy people are those who keep a ledger of wrongs done to them.
- _____ 6. A guileless person does not impute wrong motives for others actions.
- _____ 7. What one thinks is important because it can affect his actions toward others.
- _____ 8. To ascribe evil motives to a person may indicate that you have a problem with that person.
- _____ 9. I know of people who have kept a written record of wrongs done to them.
- _____ 10. Love is slow to question the good intent of any man's heart.
- _____ 11. Christianity is known for its emphasis upon mercy, not justice.
- _____ 12. The joy of the Christian is the downfall of wrong, not people.
- _____ 13. Job is a good example of one whose friends (?) imputed evil to him because of what he was suffering.
- _____ 14. Love not only is willing to forgive sins, but also does not hold a grudge concerning them.

